

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. A computer-implemented method for presenting a help source file
2 comprising:
3 maintaining a help system comprised of a single set of one or more help source
4 files;
5 receiving a request to present a help source file;
6 obtaining a help history file in response to the request, wherein the help history
7 file stores information relating to a usage of the help system; and
8 displaying a customized presentation of the help source file based on the
9 information stored in the help history file.

1 2. The method of claim 1 wherein computer program code stored within
2 the help source file is configured to display the customized presentation of the help
3 source file based on the information stored in the help history file.

1 3. The method of claim 2 wherein the computer program code is written in
2 a scripting language.

1 4. The method of claim 2 wherein the computer program code is
2 configured to distinguish between help source files opened from within the help system
3 and those opened from outside of the help system.

1 5. The method of claim 1 wherein the one or more help source files are
2 stored in a tagged meta language representation.

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1 6. The method of claim 5 wherein the tagged meta language representation
2 comprises hypertext markup language (HTML).

1 7. The method of claim 5 wherein the tagged meta language representation
2 comprises extensible markup language (XML).

1 8. The method of claim 1 wherein the help file history comprises a cookie.

1 9. The method of claim 1 wherein the information stored in the help
2 history file comprises a history of every help source file in the help system opened by a
3 user within a specified time interval.

1 10. The method of claim 1 wherein the information stored in the help
2 history file comprises a user's current location within the help system.

1 11. The method of claim 1 wherein the customized presentation provides for
2 modifying an amount of material from within the help source files that is displayed.

1 12. The method of claim 11 wherein the amount of information displayed is
2 based on an experience level of a user indicated by the help history file.

1 13. The method of claim 1 wherein the presentation is customized based on
2 a type of material within the help source files.

1 14. A computer-implemented help system for presenting a help file,
2 comprising:
3 a computer having a display device attached thereto;
4 means, performed by the computer, for maintaining a help system comprised of
5 a single set of one or more help source files;
6 means, performed by the computer, for receiving a request to present a help
7 source file;
8 means, performed by the computer, for obtaining a help history file in response
9 to the request, wherein the help history file stores information relating to a usage of the
10 help system; and
11 means, performed by the computer, for displaying a customized presentation of
12 the help source file based on the information stored in the help history file.

1 15. The system of claim 14 wherein the means for displaying a customized
2 presentation of the help source file comprises computer program code stored within the
3 help source file.

1 16. The system of claim 15 wherein the computer program code is written in
2 a scripting language.

1 17. The system of claim 15 wherein the computer program code is
2 configured to distinguish between help source files opened from within the help system
3 and those opened from outside of the help system.

1 18. The system of claim 14 wherein the one or more help source files are
2 stored in a tagged meta language representation.

1 19. The system of claim 18 wherein the tagged meta language representation :
2 comprises hypertext markup language (HTML).

1 20. The system of claim 18 wherein the tagged meta language representation
2 comprises extensible markup language (XML).

1 21. The system of claim 14 wherein the help file history comprises a cookie.

1 22. The system of claim 14 wherein the information stored in the help
2 history file comprises a history of every help source file in the help system opened by a
3 user within a specified time interval.

1 23. The system of claim 14 wherein the information stored in the help
2 history file comprises a user's current location within the help system.

1 24. The system of claim 14 wherein the customized presentation provides for
2 modifying an amount of material from within the help source files that is displayed.

1 25. The system of claim 24 wherein the amount of information displayed is
2 based on an experience level of a user indicated by the help history file.

1 26. The system of claim 14 wherein the presentation is customized based on
2 a type of material within the help source files.

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1 27. An article of manufacture embodying logic for performing a method for
2 presenting a help source file on a display device connected to a computer, the method
3 comprising:
4 maintaining a help system comprised of a single set of one or more help source
5 files;
6 receiving a request to present a help source file;
7 obtaining a help history file in response to the request, wherein the help history
8 file stores information relating to a usage of the help system; and
9 displaying a customized presentation of the help source file based on the
10 information stored in the help history file.

1 28. The article of manufacture of claim 27 wherein computer program code
2 stored within the help source file is configured to display the customized presentation of
3 the help source file based on the information stored in the help history file.

1 29. The article of manufacture of claim 28 wherein the computer program
2 code is written in a scripting language.

1 30. The article of manufacture of claim 28 wherein the computer program
2 code is configured to distinguish between help source files opened from within the help
3 system and those opened from outside of the help system.

1 31. The article of manufacture of claim 27 wherein the one or more help
2 source files are stored in a tagged meta language representation.

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1 32. The article of manufacture of claim 31 wherein the tagged meta language
2 representation comprises hypertext markup language (HTML).

1 33. The article of manufacture of claim 31 wherein the tagged meta language
2 representation comprises extensible markup language (XML).

1 34. The article of manufacture of claim 27 wherein the help file history
2 comprises a cookie.

1 35. The article of manufacture of claim 27 wherein the information stored in
2 the help history file comprises a history of every help source file in the help system
3 opened by a user within a specified time interval.

1 36. The article of manufacture of claim 27 wherein the information stored in
2 the help history file comprises a user's current location within the help system.

1 37. The article of manufacture of claim 27 wherein the customized
2 presentation provides for modifying an amount of material from within the help source
3 files that is displayed.

1 38. The article of manufacture of claim 37 wherein the amount of
2 information displayed is based on an experience level of a user indicated by the help
3 history file.

1 39. The article of manufacture of claim 27 wherein the presentation is
2 customized based on a type of material within the help source files.